(b) if so, the details thereof: and

(c) the number of persons likely to be benefited by scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH) : (a) and (b) The Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) has ceased to exist with the introduction of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) with effect from 1.6.1997. Under the TPDS, there shall be two price regimes—one for the families living below poverty line (BPL) and another for families above poverty line (APL). However, if any State is made any additional allocation to meet special requirements, then the foodgrains are supplied at the Economic Cost. The details are as under:—

(Rs. per kg.)

	BPL	APL	Economic Cost
Wheat	2.50	4.50	7.62
Rice			
Common	3.50	—	8.45
Fine	3.50	6.50	8.88
Superfine	—	7.50	9.27

(c) The number of persons living below poverty line who are likely to be benefited by the Scheme is about 32.03 crores. It is not possible to estimate the number of APL beneficiaries as it is left to the States to distribute the foodgrains at a scale to be determined by them from the allotment of foodgrains made for APL families.

[Translation]

Price of Imported Wheat

*88. SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI
SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY :

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the price of imported wheat is comparatively more than the price of the wheat procured on the support price in the domestic market;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the reasons for import of wheat at a higher price?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH) : (a) and (b) The estimated economic cost of imported wheat would be marginally more than the economic cost of indigenously procured wheat. The details in this regard are as under:—

	Pooled Economic Cost (Estimated) (Rs./MT)
Imported Wheat	8076.00
Indigenous Wheat	7528.30

(c) Import of wheat was undertaken to tide over the tight domestic wheat stock position and to augment the overall supply position with a view to contain the rise in prices caused by a fall in production, and the consequent lower procurement of wheat for the Central Pool during 1996-97.

[English]

Import of Inferior Wheat from Australia by STC

*89. DR. A.K. PATEL :
SHRI CHITTA BASU :

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Australian wheat imported by STC contained exotic weeds, as appeared in the 'Economic Times' dated May 20, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein;

(c) whether the STC have violated norms regarding import of wheat;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor;

(e) whether an Indian team of experts recently visited Australia to discuss the problem of contaminated wheat;

(f) if so, the details and outcome thereof;

(g) whether complaints have been received from various States regarding the sub-standard quality of wheat imported which is unfit for human consumption; and

(h) if so, the details thereof and reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH) : (a) and (b) Presence of some weed seeds was detected in the Australian wheat. Such weed seeds are an integral part of any foodgrains harvest and it is not unusual to detect weed seeds in any bulk import of foodgrains. The Australian wheat conforms to the provisions of the Contract and the specifications laid down in the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and is fit for human consumption.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. The Government of India had deputed a team of experts to Australia to discuss the issue of presence of exotic weeds in the imported Australian wheat. Based on the findings of the team, it has been decided that imported wheat would be distributed only in the non-wheat growing areas to ensure that exotic weed seeds do not reach the wheat growing areas.

(g) No, Sir.

(h) Does not arise.

Prices of Drugs

*90. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA : Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether many vital drugs have escaped the price mechanism in the absence of any regulatory authority;

(b) whether it is also a fact that apart from anti-malarial and anti harmonal drugs prices going high, the prices of even common drugs have gone very high as a result thereof; and

(c) the steps taken for setting up Pricing Authority?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) For selection of drugs for price control the 'Modifications in Drug Policy, 1986' lays down the criteria, which are based on economic factors alone and not on therapeutic considerations.

(b) Studies conducted for large selling formulations, including anti-malarial and hormonal drugs, reveal that while there is some increase in prices, there are cases of price decrease also. The price increase is not across the board and abnormal and can be attributed to various factors like increase in cost of raw materials, utilities, fluctuation in foreign exchange etc.

(c) The Chairman and Member Secretary of NPPA have been appointed. However, NPPA has not become functional due to problems of administrative nature, which are being sorted out.

Shortage of Wheat, Rice and Sugar in PDS Shops

*91. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :
SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY :

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has been reported by the PDS shops in the States that there is an acute shortage of wheat, rice and sugar;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) the main reasons for the shortage of foodgrains;

(d) the total quantity of wheat and rice supplied to the State Governments for distribution on the PDS shops since July, 1997;

(e) whether the quota from the 1st of June, 1997 under the new policy has not been fully and sufficiently despatched to those States; and

(f) if so, the total shortage felt and the steps the Government propose to ensure timely availability of wheat, rice and sugar in sufficient quantity to the Fair Price Shops in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH) : (a) to (c) No such report about the non-availability of foodgrains and sugar in Fair Price Shops, after launching the Targeted PDS, have been received.

(d) In July, 1997 9,76,220 MT of rice and 6,08,020 MT of wheat has been allocated to States and UTs.

(e) According to available information sufficient stocks are in place to meet the requirements against allocations made under TPDS for the months of June and July, 1997.

(f) Does not arise.